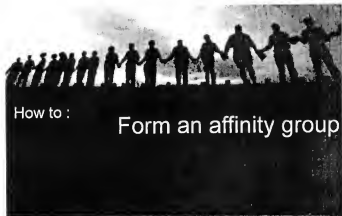




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How to :

Form an affinity group



Ingredients :

- A circle of friends or close allies
- Trust
- Consensus
- Courage
- A good idea



Recipe :

- Affinity -

Affinity groups are most often prominent in activists circles, however not limited to them. They are comprised of a handful of individuals (typically 2-15) who share a common interest for something they are passionate about. A sewing group or band is an example of an affinity group. Creating an affinity group is essential in planning any successful protest, march, rally, or political demonstration. Even if you have no experience of working with an anti-war or anti-capitalist group before, the ability to start one is extremely tangible.

It's usually a good idea to discuss and contrast what exactly happened after the plan was carried out. Did it contrast sharply to what the original intentions were? Did everyone follow through with their commitments? Did something unexpected occur in which no member of the group could control (ex. Were there arrests?) Then, suggest ideas as to how things could be handled better in the future (ex. Collect bond money prior.) Finally, remember to discuss all of the things that went well. What was your group pleased with? What are some of the strengths that were shared and skill people learned? This portion of the discussion is the time to support each other and develop your next plan.



- Developing a plan -

Affinity groups answer to themselves. Making the decision to take any action is extremely important and should involve a serious (but that doesn't mean you can't have fun) commitment to your organizing if you are serious about the issue you are tackling. This commitment involves trusting your affinity group members with secrets that are disclosed to your group, and your group only. If while developing your plans your group decides that other affinity groups should be aware of your ideas, it must be agreed upon by all members before the plan is shared. For example, if your affinity group plans to conduct a series of banner drops (see section on banner drops), and discovers a need for additional help in order to carry this out, you may contact another trusted group for support. Working with other affinity groups is a wonderful way to make connections with other folks who may have ideas that require collaborating various skills and tactics which one affinity group alone cannot do by itself.

It's important to remember that no matter how careful, stealthy, or clever your group is, there is always a great possibility your ideas may not work out as planned. It's best to not look at these situations as failures, but rather learning experiences. It is almost inevitable that plans will not always run smoothly. Do not get discouraged. The more experience your group attains, the more fine tuned your plans will be, thus chances for success is inevitable as well.



There is a good chance you are a part of an affinity group already and may not realize it. Think of individuals you trust and share common political views with. These are the people you might vent to regarding your outrage for the war. Perhaps you already bounce ideas off of each other about a world you wish to see in your lifetime or maybe suggest books or documentaries regarding topics you all are passionate about. Why not take these conversations one step further? You have already developed a bond with these people and most likely share some level of trust amongst them. Why not try meeting together and start organizing?

- consensus -

Deciding and acting together as a group is necessary in order for your group to be effective. Make decisions collectively with every concern, idea, and voice heard and considered. In one common format, the discussion goes around a circle, each person taking a turn to speak. In another, suited better to larger gatherings, the group begins by agreeing on a facilitator, an individual who will help keep the discussion constructive and on topic.

Another individual volunteers to "take stack," keeping track of the order in which people raise their hands to speak; if people feel it is important to make sure different demographics represented in the group get equal time speaking, this person can take a separate stack for each, and alternate between them.

Next, individuals propose items for the agenda of the discussion (this can be anything from mapping out a march route to discussing where and how signs and banners for the demonstration will be made), then come to consensus of each. During the discussion process, individuals can ask to respond directly to them to hear their response. Individuals can also make comments on the process of the discussion, urging people to focus when they are getting distracted, or proposing a break so people can stretch their legs or discuss matters in small groups. When it's time to make a decision on an issue, individuals make proposals, propose amendments, and then address concerns until the group reaches consensus or the closest thing to it.

